

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 005342

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT, FOR, G/TIP, G, INL, DRL, EUR/PGI, EUR/SE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/14/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [PHUM](#) [KWMN](#) [SMIG](#) [KFRD](#) [PREF](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKS PUT ON POOR SHOW AT ISTANBUL TIP CONFERENCE

Classified By: POL Counselor Janice Weiner, for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Despite a prime opportunity to provide valuable input in the August 25-27 TIP conference, the Turkish MFA, academia, and gendarmerie representatives dropped the ball. From not understanding the difference between smuggling and trafficking, to shamelessly touting Turkey's liberal visa regime, to blaming their neighbors, the Turkish presenters made the worst of a great opportunity and left a bad impression on many of their foreign guests. Presenters wasted time explaining what everyone already knew, and failed adequately to discuss possible solutions to regional TIP. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) Istanbul's Bahcesehir University hosted the August 25-27 "Trafficking in Persons in South East Europe: A Threat to Human Security" workshop. The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Center for Strategic Research (SAM), the Partnership for Peace Consortium of Defense Academies and Security Studies Institutes, Regional Stability in South East Europe Study Group (RSSEE), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) jointly organized this workshop.

-----  
What the Turks had to say  
-----

13. (U) Ambassador Murat Bilhan, Chairman of SAM, opened the conference by saying that by virtue of Turkey's location, it has become the conduit of both good (gas and oil) and evil (international crime). At the end of each day, Bilhan repeatedly asked the audience to give him a portrait of the typical trafficker. Despite members advising Bilhan that there is no typical trafficker, he persisted in asking the question.

14. (C) Bahcesehir University Professor Nilufer Narli opined that while economic factors were important, there is a strong political factor involved in human trafficking. She cited examples of political persecution in Iran and Iraq pushing their citizens to migrate to Turkey. (Comment: Professor Narli, like many of her compatriots, clearly does not have an understanding of the difference between smuggling and trafficking. End Comment.) During a CNN Turk interview with Professor Narli, she babbled on about smuggling, much to the dismay of IOM's Ankara Chief of Mission, Marielle Sander-Lindstrom.

15. (U) Captain Ilker Temel, Chief of the Turkish Jandarma's Counter-Trafficking Unit, mentioned the TIP Report and asserted that though Tier 3 countries were subject to sanctions, he has never seen any implemented, making the rating useless. MFA officials nodded in agreement. Temel listed problems with law enforcement in battling TIP, including lack of training, no database, players not knowing their counterparts in other countries, and the insufficient number of experts. Ambassador N. Murat Ersavci, MFA's Director General for Consular Affairs, lauded Captain Temel and the Jandarma, saying Temel's presentation was the first time Ersavci had seen law enforcement being candid and open. Ersavci also suggested IOM be the contact point for law enforcement agencies.

16. (U) Akif Ayhan, MFA's Deputy Director General for Consular Affairs, admitted that TIP is a problem for Turkey, which has "inherited some issues of this phenomenon from our neighborhood." He warned the audience that he was going to say something very provocative and then, with fervor, proclaimed that there are no means to eradicate TIP from this planet - we can, he stated, only diminish the impact and lessen the damage TIP causes. This drew blank stares from the audience. Ayhan insisted that the Organization for Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) is the logical international body to handle the TIP issue in the region. Ayhan declared that Turkey, with its renowned hospitality, "peaceful and easy" lifestyle and liberal visa regime, was a natural lure for migrants. He then asked rhetorically why anyone would want to go through the hassle of getting a Schengen visa when a visa to Turkey is only 10 USD.

17. (U) Ayhan commended Turkey as having a "free and open society" and asserted the GOT had been brave to start the

anti-trafficking campaign. He congratulated the Human Resources Development Foundation on their TIP shelter in Istanbul and announced that Ankara Shelter will open in September. He claimed that there are plans for shelters in Trabzon and Antalya. (Comment: We have not seen any action or plans. End Comment.) Ayhan vowed that the GOT is "adamant and keen" to do "everything" to combat the TIP problem, though Turkey "is not the hub of trafficking" and that those journalists reporting on TIP in Turkey "are biased." In his closing statements, Ayhan lamented that a major obstacle to battling TIP in Turkey is funding. Funds, he stated, should not be used to train, as there are too many training programs already, but rather be used for "day-to-day expenses and down-to-earth issues."

18. (U) In response to the question of repatriation of trafficking victims, Akif Ayhan explained that Turkey grants six-month humanitarian visas (called residence permits) without question to all trafficking victims. Inspector Fikret Isgoren, MOI's head of the Bureau of Foreigners, Borders and Asylum, claimed, however, there is careful evaluation before issuing the visas/permits. Both Ayhan and Isgoren claimed the GOT provides trafficking victims free medical assistance.

19. (C) Isgoren, originally slated to give a presentation, backed out at the last minute, according to Livia Vedrasco, IOM Vienna. She was irked that he exceed what would have been his allotted ten minutes answering a question, and blamed Turkey's neighbors for not working with the GOT.

10. (U) Unlike other Turkish presenters, Tuba Dunder, Program Coordinator for HRDF, was clear and concise as she reported on the funding and working of Turkey's first TIP shelter in Istanbul.

11. (U) Basak Kale, a researcher at Middle East Technical University's Department for International Relations and Center for European Studies, like HRDF's Dunder, presented lucid and logical commentary on Turkey's TIP problem and how EU accession has boosted the necessity for the GOT to work on the issues.

12. (U) Lt. Colonel Birol Tekince from the NATO Partnership for Peace Mobile Training Team in Turkey explained that with assistance from IOM, the team provided training on TIP and smuggling issues to judges, prosecutors and border control officials.

-----  
The "Foreigners" Take  
-----

13. (U) Elina Siderova, an IOM counter-trafficking project staff member working in the Istanbul shelter, recounted stories of victims in Turkey.

14. (C) Marielle Sander-Lindstrom, Chief of IOM Ankara, praised the GOT for "not blaming anyone else" for its trafficking problem and for working on remedies to the problem "not because the GOT has been told to, but because it is the right thing to do." Lindstrom told PolOff at a break that she was floored and embarrassed at Ayhan's presentation, and that he and Ersavci usually "were not like that."

15. (C) Helga Konrad, OSCE's Special Representative on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, attended the opening night dinner. HRDF's Dunder told PolOff that Konrad paid a visit to the Shelter and "was impressed."

16. (C) COMMENT: Though a good portion of the dialogue could have and should have been focused on finding possible solutions to the TIP problem, it was not. Unfortunately, all but a few speakers spent time and countless powerpoint slides explaining what everyone already knew. END COMMENT.  
MCELDOWNEY